

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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P 051052Z MAY 78 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7322
INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 02813

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT CORRECTED PARA 1.)

EMO. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, US, CH, TW
SUBJECT: TAIWAN REACTION TO BRZEZINSKI TRIP

REF: TAIPEI 2775

SUMMARY: PRESS REACTION TO BRZEZINSKI TRIP, PARTICULARLY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRESS, HAS BEEN STRONG AND BITTER. UNSOLICITED OFFICIAL REACTION, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN SPARSE THUS FAR. THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS FOR THIS: A) GROC HAD ANTICIPATED NEW MOVES ON NORMALIZATION, INCLUDING POSSIBLE HIGH-LEVEL VISIT, FOLLOWING PANAMA CANAL VOTES; B) THAT BRZEZINSKI ARRIVAL DATE IN PEKING COINCIDES WITH INAUGURATION HERE INJECTS ELEMENT OF EMBARRASSMENT WHICH MAKES SUBJECT DIFFICULT FOR OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS AND C) OFFICIALS GIVE IMPRESSION THEY ARE RELUCTANT TO COMMENT UNTIL THEY GET THEIR SENSE OF AFFRONT OVER THE TIMING UNDER CONTROL. GENERAL FEELING AMONG NON-PARTY TAIWANESE POLITICIANS IS THAT TRIP WILL SIGNIFICANTLY ACCELERATE PROCESS
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NORMALIZATION WHICH THEY SEE AS UNDERMINING LEGITIMACY OF KMT GOVERNMENT TO THEIR ULTIMATE BENEFIT.

1. MOFA'S NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT DEVOTING MAJOR EFFORT TO ANALYZING VISIT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS. ALTHOUGH ONE OFFICIAL CONTACT SAID GOVERNMENT NOT EXPECTING DRAMATIC PROGRESS TOWARD NORMALIZATION TO BE

ANNOUNCED, THEY NEVERTHELESS REGARD VISIT AS MAJOR STEP IN NORMALIZATION PROCESS.

2. EMBASSY HAS NOT YET HEARD EXPRESSED THE HIGH DEGREE OF OFFICIAL CONCERN AND PESSIMISM WHICH CHARACTERIZED GROC'S ANTICIPATION OF SECRETARY VANCE'S VISIT LAST YEAR. THIS SHOULD NOT, HOWEVER, BE INTERPRETED AS ABSENCE OF SERIOUS CONCERN. SUCH REACTION AS WE HAVE HAD HAS BEEN SPARSE, BUT ILLUMINATING. CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF AT SMALL EMBASSY DINNER PARTY TERMED THE TIMING "VERY BAD" AND "INSULTING". IF U.S. SELECTED DATE, THEN INSULT WAS DELIBERATE; IF PRC SUGGESTED DATE AND U.S. AGREED, "THEN THAT'S EVEN WORSE."

3. UNIVERSITY DEAN REGRETTED THAT TRIP WOULD "SPOIL" INAUGURATION. OTHER CONTACTS INCLUDING A LAWYER AND A BUSINESSMAN SUSPECTED U.S. DELIBERATELY SELECTED MAY 20 DATE. IMPORTANT NON-KMT TAIWANESE POLITICAL CONTACT NOT DISMAYED OVER TIMING BRZEZINSKI TRIP. HE SEES VISIT ADVANCING NORMALIZATION PROCESS WHICH HE BELIEVES WILL UNDERCUT LEGITIMACY MAINLAND-CONTROLLED GOVERNMENT THEREBY WORKING TO ADVANTAGE TAIWANESE WHO SEEKING MORE POLITICAL POWER. NOT SURPRISINGLY, TAIWANESE IN GENERAL LESS UPSET ABOUT THE VISIT AND ITS TIMING THAN ARE MAINLANDERS.

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4. ANNOUNCEMENT OF BRZEZINSKI TRIP SEEMS TO HAVE HAD NO EFFECT ON ROC ECONOMY, WHICH IS BOOMING. INVESTMENT, CAPITAL SPENDING, INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION AND EXPORTS AND IMPORTS ARE ALL UP OVER COMPARABLE PERIODS LAST YEAR. CAPACITY UTILIZATION RATES ARE APPROACHING ALL-TIME HIGH AND INVENTORIES HAVE DECLINED SUBSTANTIALLY. ON MAY 3, PRICES ON TAIPEI STOCK EXCHANGE ROSE TO HIGHEST LEVELS SINCE EXCHANGE ESTABLISHED SIXTEEN YEARS AGO. INDEX JUMPED OVER EIGHT POINTS AND EVERY ISSUE EITHER UP OR STATIC.

5. TO DATE EMBASSY HAS DETECTED NO REACTION TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF TRIP BY OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN ECONOMIC AFFAIRS OR CHINESE BUSINESSMEN. CONSENSUS AMONG FIFTY OR SO AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN IN CONTACT WITH EMBASSY SINCE ANNOUNCEMENT IS THAT NORMALIZATION IS PURPOSE OF PEKING TRIP. THERE IS SOME CONCERN BRZEZINSKI LAYING GROUND-WORK FOR POST-ELECTION CHINA TRIP BY CARTER'

6. SHARPEST EDITORIAL REACTION BRZEZINSKI TRIP SO FAR FROM SMALL CIRCULATION ENGLISH-LANGUAGE CHINA NEWS WHOSE EDITORIALS USUALLY WRITTEN BY AMERICAN FORMER

PROFESSOR OF JOURNALISM AND CORRESPONDENT, BUT INSPIRED
BY GIO. TWICE WITHIN WEEK CHINA NEWS EDITORIALY
THREATENED THAT ONCE CUT ADRIFT BY U.S. ROC WOULD BE
FREE TO SEEK OTHER FRIENDS AND WEAPONS SUPPLIERS.
NORMALIZATION COULD MEAN WAR IN THE STRAITS WITH
UNPREDICTABLE INVOLVEMENT BY OTHERS, PAPER ALSO
SUGGESTED. COMMENT CHINESE PRESS GENERALLY RAN ALONG
LINES THAT TRIP BODES ILL FOR GROC, AND BRZEZINSKI,
DESPITE STATE DEPARTMENT DISCLAIMERS, WOULD DISCUSS
NORMALIZATION. SMALL CIRCULATION INDEPENDENCE EVENING
POST ONLY PAPER TO TAKE RUEFUL COGNIZANCE
COINCIDENCE OF DATES FOR BRZEZINSKI TRIP AND CHIANG
CHING-KUO INAUGURATION. (FULLER REACTION REFTEL)
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